

WASHINGTON, DC—On Tuesday, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) voted for H. Res. 1024, a resolution that recognizes the 187th anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrates Greek and American democracy. — “I am proud and honored to extend my warm congratulations and best wishes to the people of Greece and to Greek Americans from across my District as they celebrate the 187th anniversary of the independence of Greece. Greece represents a beacon of democracy that is admired for its history and contributions in furthering democratic principles around the world, and has been a strategic partner and strong ally of the United States.” said Congressman Sestak.

March 25, 2008 marks the National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, the 187th anniversary of the beginning of the revolution that freed the Greek people from the Ottoman Empire. The day celebrates the Greek people’s aspirations for democracy.

Ancient Greeks developed the concept of democracy, in which the supreme power to govern was vested in the people. The Founding Fathers of the United States drew heavily on the political experience and philosophy of ancient Greece in forming our representative democracy.

The resolution recognized the major role that Greece played in World War II to protect freedom and democracy through such bravery as was shown in the historic Battle of Crete, which provided the Axis land war with its first major setback, setting off a chain of events that significantly affected the outcome of World War II. Hundreds of thousands of Greek civilians died during World War II in this fight for freedom and liberty.

Throughout the 20th century, Greece was one of only three countries in the world -- other than the former British Empire -- that has allied with the United States in every major international conflict. Greece is a strategic partner and ally of the United States in bringing political stability and economic development to the volatile Balkan region, having invested over \$20 billion in the countries of the region, thereby creating over 200,000 new jobs, and having contributed over \$750 million in development aid for the region.

Greece was also recognized as being a top contributor to the defense efforts of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), spending an estimated 3 percent of its gross domestic product on defense, and is also an active participant in peacekeeping and peace-building operations conducted by international organizations, including the United Nations, NATO, the European Union (EU), and the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The resolution also recognizes Greece for its extraordinary success in recent years in furthering cross-cultural understanding and reducing tensions between Greece and Turkey, as seen most recently with the January 2008 visit to Turkey by Greece's Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, the first official visit by a Greek Prime Minister in 49 years.

“Greece is an exemplary ambassador -- fostering tolerance, reason, and understanding. This becomes critical as we continue to face 21st Century challenges and conflicts around the world,” said Congressman Sestak. “Over time, the people of Greece and the United States have

forged a close bond in their commitment to preserving principles to preserve freedom, democracy, peace, stability and human rights around the world.”